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ZIMBABWE

SNAPSHOT

Improved Banana Crops Bring Family Together

With good agricultural practices and improved market access, small-scale banana farmer drastically improves income.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Judith Mlambo is already earning more than twice the income she did prior to receiving training from USAID-STAMP. With program assistance, she plans to expand her banana farm and hopes to quadruple her income over the next year.

“Tendai came home because at last I am making real money. He wants to help me...so we can prepare more land for the banana crop.”

*Judith Mlambo
Banana farmer*

Telling Our Story

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Judith Mlambo, like many Zimbabweans, has been a subsistence farmer for years, barely scraping by with her small banana crop.

For the past nine years, she has been selling an average of eight tons of bananas a year at \$0.10 per kilogram, which equates to an annual income of roughly \$800.

After learning about the United States Agency for International Development's Smallholder Technology and Access to Markets Program (USAID-STAMP), Mrs. Mlambo began attending trainings on agricultural best practices. She has now been attending trainings for five months.

As part of its overarching goal of improving incomes and food security, USAID-STAMP is partnering with Rusitu Valley Fresh Produce (RVFP) to ensure farmers receive fair prices for their crops. RVFP now pays Mrs. Mlambo \$0.20 per kilogram, effectively doubling her income without any changes to production numbers.

The help she is receiving from the program is allowing her to increase yields as well. Through the trainings, she is learning to view her farm as a business, investing time and money into its growth.

“I used to think only shop owners were business people, but now I know that I am a businesswoman, too,” she said.

Thanks to the good agricultural practices Mrs. Mlambo learned from USAID-STAMP, such as mulching and proper use of fertilizer, and improved postharvest handling techniques, her previously neglected banana field is now thriving.

With this significant increase in yields and income, Mrs. Mlambo's son, Tendai, has returned to the family farm to help his mother with her flourishing banana crop. Previously earning low wages in the distant capital city, Tendai is now able to live at home and help grow the family business.

The Mlambos are expanding their farm, and expect to harvest more than 18 tons of bananas on their 1.5 hectare farm in the 2012/2013 season, which would translate to more than \$3,500 in income – four times more than what Mrs. Mlambo made a year ago.

USAID-STAMP will work to increase the productivity, income, and food security of 4,500 smallholders in two provinces over a two-year period.